

# In the News

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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## Inside this issue:

Message from the Mayor	1
District Will Honor Centenarians	1
Community Spotlight	2
Civil Rights Tax Fairness	2
Education Fair for DC Employess	2
District Encourages 3 Organ Donors	3
District to Launch College Savings Plan This Fall	3
Watts Branch Renovations	4
District Activities	4
Community News	5
Upcoming Events	5

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## Message from the Mayor

What a great time we had on August 6 during the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual National Night Out Against Crime. This year, our citizens staged an important show of unity during a year when homicides are up and our quest to stop crime is more crucial than ever.

The city came together in a way that makes me proud to be its Mayor. At each stop in the wards I visited, citizens showed up to meet and greet police, setting a dialogue to make our city safer.

We might have a great police chief that's admired in the region, but reducing crime and increasing our quality of life is a group effort. Our citizens are critical in solving and reducing crime, and the government can't do it alone.

I believe Martin Luther King, Jr. said it best, "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

National Night Out is held the first Tuesday of each August. The purpose is to promote involvement in crime and drug prevention activities, strengthening police-community relations and encouraging neighborhood camaraderie to create safer streets.

We kicked off this year's National Night Out at the Brentwood Recreation Center on 15<sup>th</sup> Street in Northeast. That neighborhood's Police Service Area (PSA 505) has done a tremendous job to ease crime in the community.

Working together with the local ANC Commissioner Regina James, PSA 505 closed down a house known for its prostitution activities at 1007 Rhode Island Avenue. The community reduced prostitution and complaints of prostitution in the PSA to zero. Now, that's success.

Quality of life is also an important part of making our communities safer. PSA 505 worked to clean up the alley in the 2200 block of 14th and 15th Streets by clearing abandoned vehicles and cleaning the vacant lot of a local car mechanic. In fact, so much attention was paid to this area that drug users in one house packed up and moved out.

Elsewhere during National Night Out, I visited the soon-to-be-opened 4D-1 Police Substation at 750 Park Road, NW. I met enthusiastic citizens eager to learn more about how they can help their community.

We must work harder this year to ensure that crime is reduced. As I write this, crime in the District of Columbia is down about 2 percent so far this year, compared to last year. But homicides are up 30 percent. About 26 percent of this year's homicides were connected to illegal drugs. Another 21 percent involved arguments. Overall, 75 percent of all homicides so far this year have been committed with firearms.

We must stop this torrent of violence, and it's a group effort.

So please join us for another National Night Out next year. But meanwhile, keep in mind that crime prevention is not a one-night event — it is a 365-day-a-year commitment by both police and community. If we all pitch in and help each other and our police force, we can make the District of Columbia safer every day.

## District Will Honor Centenarians

This fall, the District will honor residents 100 years of age or older at the 16th annual Salute to District of Columbia Centenarians. If you know of a DC resident who will be at least 100 years of age by September 30, call the DC Office on Aging so they can receive their invitation to this special reception. For more information, call the DC Office on Aging at (202) 724-5622.



## AGENCY WEBSITES

[Office of Tax and Revenue](#)

[Department of Parks and Recreation](#)

[Department of Employment Services](#)

[Metropolitan Police Department](#)

[Office of Boards and Commissions](#)

[Commission on the Arts and Humanities](#)

[Advisory Neighborhood Commissions](#)

## Community Spotlight

Jeremy Drummond, 16, exemplifies the characteristics of a dedicated youth volunteer. While tackling the challenges associated with being young, he still finds time to succeed academically and engage in numerous service activities.

Jeremy currently serves as president of the Youth Ministry of the Master's Child Church. Every first Saturday of the month, he holds peer-to-peer discussion meetings with other youth groups in the District. Every third Saturday of the month, Jeremy leads a group of youth on a service project. One notable service activity was Project Harvest 2001 during which Jeremy led an effort to collect, pack, and deliver 25 dinners to families in need in the District. He hopes to add 25 additional families each year.

In addition to his work within the faith community, Jeremy tutors and mentors younger children. He also served as a youth spokesperson for the 2002 National Youth Service Day. For this event, he led 22 young people in volunteer efforts at SOME (So Others Might Eat).

Jeremy's success is not limited to service. Recently inducted into the 2002 National Honor Roll Society and selected as a member of Who's Who in Academics, he has maintained good grades at Banneker Senior High School where he is a senior. Cheryl S. Robinson, the person who nominated Jeremy, said "He's a truly gifted young man and feels that it's important to use the internal gifts God has blessed him with to help others."

Thanks, Jeremy, for all the good work that you are doing!



Jeremy Drummond

## Civil Rights Tax Fairness

I recently signed the Civil Rights Tax Fairness Act legislation that updates our existing code to allow people who have been discriminated against in the workplace to receive funds without being taxed. The bill allows people who have been awarded a "lump sum" compensation from employment discrimination not to be taxed on those funds.

For example, if a civil rights case results in a \$100,000 settlement, the victim of discrimination may receive just \$30,747. That happens because the \$100,000 is typically added to the victim's income and he or she enters a higher tax bracket and pays taxes on that income. Also, the victim must pay attorney's fees.

We firmly believe it was never the intention of any elected city official to use the pain and suffering of its citizens in discrimination cases as a source of government revenue. That's why we think this amendment will be good for our citizens.

The DC Civil Rights Tax Fairness Act of 2001 will correct the DC tax law and stop what should be considered wrongful taxation. Simply put, it helps workers keep what they were rightly awarded. Under the previous law, if a District of Columbia resident recovered damages in a civil rights case, he or she would pay DC and federal income taxes on all funds recovered. This new bill changes that, making it so a resident who wins such a lawsuit retains more of the lump sum than in previous years.

So, I'm pleased to say that I signed this bill, and that from now on, victims of discrimination will be treated with the tax fairness that they deserve in the District of Columbia.



## Education Fair for DC Employees

The DC Office of Personnel will sponsor an Education Fair on Wednesday, August 21, from 10 am to 2 pm at One Judiciary Square, 441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Lobby Auditorium (formerly Council Chambers). The event is open to all District government employees for the purpose of providing information about local adult education opportunities and degree programs.

Representatives from area colleges and universities — including Marymount University, University of Phoenix (Maryland Campus and Online), University of Oklahoma (DC Campus), Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, Regent University, National-Louis University, Keller Graduate School, George Mason University, American University-College of Arts and Sciences, Old Dominion University, Graduate School USDA, Bluefield College, Trinity College, and Strayer University — will be at the fair to answer questions about educational opportunities.



**LINK TO OTHER WEBSITES**

[DC Agenda](#)

[Hands on DC](#)

[DC Convention and Tourism](#)

[DC Public Library](#)

## District Encourages Organ Donors

Imagine you decide to donate a kidney to your brother, and then take three weeks off work to recover. Now, imagine having to use your annual leave time to endure such a hardship. Well, that won't happen in the District of Columbia anymore.

Two weeks ago, I signed the re-enactment of the District of Columbia's Organ Donor Leave Act, which provides a tremendous opportunity to increase the number of organ donors in our city.



In an effort to improve the act, we've amended it to provide government employees leave with pay to serve as organ or bone marrow donors. This is a great way to spark organ donations – a crucial step in helping people live longer and more fruitful lives.

Take, for example, Terri Godwin, Webmaster for the Executive Office of the Mayor section of the District of Columbia's web portal. She's done a fine job helping make the website citizen-friendly and easy to use. In June, Terri took the bold step of donating a kidney to her sister in North Carolina.

Terri made a significant sacrifice, but she was forced to use her annual leave to make the donation. Coworkers in the Office of Communications, where Terri works, also pitched in their annual leave to help Terri.

Now, an employee is entitled to up to 30 days of leave to serve as an organ donor and up to seven days of leave to serve as a bone marrow donor without loss or reduction in pay, leave, or credit for time of service in a calendar year.

Our thanks go to the National Kidney Foundation of the National Capital Area, a non-profit, voluntary, health organization established in 1955. This organization has worked hard to ensure that kidney donors receive adequate treatment in the workplace for their efforts.

I think the amended act will help create incentive for people to become donors – and that's a good thing for all of us.

## District to Launch College Savings Plan This Fall

This fall, the District will launch a 529 college savings plan designed to help families, relatives, and friends save money for college expenses. The plan, which will be administered by the District's Office of Finance and Treasury, takes advantage of a federal tax law that permits states to administer a college saving plan on a tax-deferred basis. Earnings used for qualified higher education expenses will be free of federal taxes. The plan will be available to District residents and to those living outside of Washington, DC. Residents, however, will receive preferred pricing for participation and certain tax benefits.

We are very excited about bringing a college savings program to District residents, as continuing education is a high priority in the District of Columbia, and we want to offer residents incentives for saving. With skyrocketing tuition costs, this program could be the tool that makes college a reality for young people – particularly if used with the District's Tuition Assistance Grant (DCTAG) program.

The DCTAG program allows students, who plan to attend public colleges anywhere in the United States, to receive a grant of up to \$10,000 per year to pay the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition. Students attending private colleges in the District-metropolitan area or attending historically black colleges nationwide are eligible to receive \$2,500 per year.

Earnings on qualified withdrawals made by District residents will be exempt from District income taxes. Residents qualify for up to \$3,000 in annual tax deductions for contributions per taxpayer and may qualify for up to \$6,000 in annual tax deductions for married couples filing jointly where each taxpayer owns an account. If contributions exceed the allowed deduction in a year, the excess can be carried forward and deducted in subsequent tax years for up to five years.

Calvert Group, Ltd., of Bethesda, MD, was awarded a contract to be program manager after a nationwide search by the District. Calvert, an Ameritas/Acacia company, is one of the largest financial services in the DC area with approximately \$8.3 billion in assets under management for more than 220,000 investors.

For more information on the District's 529 plan, visit [www.dc529.com](http://www.dc529.com) or call 1-800-987-4859.



## Watts Branch Renovations

In the continuing spirit of summer, I joined the Ward 7 community in Northeast August 10 to salute volunteers who are helping transform the longest city park that spreads from our city to its outskirts – the Watts Branch Park.

In partnership with the group Washington Parks and People, our Department of Parks and Recreation is working to renovate the park in what's been dubbed the Watts Branch Park Neighborhood Recreation Rehabilitation Project.

New amenities will include four playgrounds, security pole lighting, landscaping, a drinking fountain, and new park furniture.

And there's more on the way.

Other new aspects of the park will include a natural amphitheater, an outdoor classroom, fountains, an athletic obstacle course, and emergency call boxes along the length of the 48-acre park. In their ongoing work, volunteers are sweating through clean-up efforts to remove garbage and set up areas for entertainment. The total cost of the project is \$688,144.

So, for the first time in history, Watts Branch Park this summer hosted an outdoor movie and concerts. It might sound like a small thing, but that's a great indicator of where this city is headed. We're helping spruce up areas that have a natural beauty, turning them into recreation areas for everyone to enjoy.

Before 1920, Watts Branch was a pristine stream valley running through farmland. Generations of folks enjoyed fishing and swimming in the cool creek. The creek serves as a stream system feeding into the Anacostia River.

So, together let's tip our summer caps to volunteers working with our city at Watts Branch Park. This is an excellent example of a partnership between the District of Columbia and its citizen organizations, as they work together to make our city shine.

For more information on our efforts in parks and recreation areas, visit <http://dpr.dc.gov>.

## District Activities



Mayor Williams celebrates groundbreaking of the headquarters for CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield at Union Center Plaza near Union Station.



Mayor speaks to residents, business owners, civic leaders, and youth during National Night Out.



# Community News

- [City Increases Efforts to Protect Residents Against West Nile Virus](#)
- [Grace Period Extended to Obtain Master Business License](#)
- [Mayor Works with White House to Balance Security Concerns](#)

[Click here](#) to view releases.

# Upcoming Events

08/09 thru 08/18	<b>Sales Tax Holiday in the District</b> Clothing, school supplies, and footwear priced under \$100 is exempt from District sales tax during this time period at District stores.
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08/17	<b>Minnesota Avenue Day</b> 11am-7pm 3900 Block Minnesota Avenue (Between Benning Road and Ames Street)
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08/24	<b>Georgia Avenue Day</b> 10am-7pm 2500 Georgia Avenue (Banneker Field)
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[Click here](#) to view the Mayor's daily schedule.

